

CLAIMS

1 *Sub* 1. An apparatus for filling a pouch having an opening with a
2 product, said apparatus comprising:

3 a hood having at least one wall defining a passageway, said passageway
4 being open to air from outside said hood, said hood having means for dispersing
5 pressurized gas into said passageway to displace said air from outside said hood;

6 a fill tube extending into said passageway of said hood to dispense
7 product for filling said pouch; and

8 means for moving said pouch into said passageway to said fill tube, said
9 means for moving supporting said opening of said pouch in said pressurized gas
10 while product from said fill tube is dispensed into said pouch.

1 2. The apparatus as set forth in claim 1, further comprising a first
2 nozzle mounted to said hood and extending into said passageway upstream of
3 said fill tube for injecting gas into said pouch to purge oxygen from said pouch.

1 *4/* 3. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a second nozzle
2 mounted to said hood and extending into said passageway downstream of said
3 fill tube for injecting a supply of gas into said pouch to purge oxygen from said
4 pouch.

1 *33* 4. The apparatus as set forth in claim 2, further comprising means
2 for reciprocally moving said nozzle in a vertical direction to move said nozzle
3 into and away from said pouch.

1 5. The apparatus as set forth in claim 1, wherein said hood further
2 comprises a collar extending around said fill tube and fluidly connected to said
3 supply of gas, said collar delivering a supply of gas around said fill tube.

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1 6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said means for moving
2 comprises a turret.

1 7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said means for dispersing
2 comprises a dispersion plate mounted to said hood and having a plurality of
3 perforations.

4 8. A method of filling a pouch having an opening with a product,
5 said method comprising:
6 opening said pouch;
7 purging oxygen from said pouch with a supply of gas;
8 moving said pouch through a hood;
9 dispersing a supply of gas around said opening of said pouch from said
10 hood;
11 filling said pouch with a product while under said hood;
12 sealing said pouch.

1 9. The method of claim 8, before said filling step, further
2 comprising purging said oxygen from said pouch with a supply of gas.

1 10. The method of claim 8, wherein said filling step further
2 comprises surrounding said product with a flow of gas.

1 11. The method of claim 8, after said filling step, further comprising
2 the step of purging said filled pouch with gas.

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